

BUILDING YOUR RELATIONAL LEGACY



WRITING A FORGIVENESS LETTER

“Ask God to make a forgiving spirit part of your legacy, not only reconciling you with others but also passing on an example of Christ’s forgiveness and grace to those who come after you.”

—Billy Graham

Do hurtful words or actions from the past haunt you? Jesus Christ came to set us free from our sin, including the pain of broken or wounded relationships. The Bible tells us to *“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14, ESV) and *“so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all”* (Romans 12:18, ESV).

While it may not always be possible to mend a broken relationship, you can seek forgiveness from God and, in the process, forgive yourself. It’s important to recognize that you can’t solve another person’s problem, but God can heal you as you let go of past pain or bitterness.

Forgiveness is best illustrated by the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and for us, it is simply granting pardon and letting go of resentment—it doesn’t mean sanctioning another person’s wrongs. True forgiveness can allow you to let go of grievances and give your pain to the Lord.

Here are some tips for writing your forgiveness letter:

1. First, pray! Ask the Lord’s guidance throughout the entire process.
2. Write in the second person (“you”), as if you are addressing the person directly.
3. Write from your heart and let your emotions influence word choice and punctuation more than grammatical rules and formal conventions.
4. Acknowledge what happened and explain that you have been deeply wounded. Accept responsibility where appropriate. Be honest but not hostile.
5. Imagine speaking to the reader eye to eye.
6. State what was done and that you forgive them—that is the heart of your letter. Stay sincere in tone and avoid any sarcasm. If appropriate, share what you have learned through this trial.
7. God commands us to forgive others, and this letter may help you do that. This exercise is for your spiritual growth and healing; you may or may not want to actually send it.

If you plan to share it with the intended recipient, write it out and wait a few days before re-reading it. Then, consider if sending the letter would be healing for you and for the people involved. If it would open new wounds, don’t send it.